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Editorial

The regime is responsible for the widespread disaster

The people are suffering tremendously from the devastation wrought by the two calamities that struck the country one after the other. The devastation was brought about by the unbridled greed of the ruling regime and its big foreign and comprador cohorts, their utter lack of compassion for the people and their criminal neglect and incompetence.

After typhoon Ondoy ravaged Metro Manila and nearby provinces, typhoon Pepeng submerged in floodwaters vast areas of Pangasinan, La Union, Cagayan Valley, Aurora, Tarlac, Zambales, Nueva Ecija,

Pampanga and Bulacan. Hundreds died in the flooded plains and from landslides in denuded mountains. Millions lost homes, personal belongings, farmlands, fishing grounds and other livelihood. The Filipino people are furious at Gloria Arroyo and her cabal's evasion of their criminal responsibility through claims that the disasters were acts of nature.

The landslides and torrents of floodwaters that descended from the Sierra Madre and Cordillera to the plains are the direct result of the destruction of mountains, forests, rivers and streams. In connivance



This issue's highlights...

Help for typhoon victims PAGE 4

Benefits of agrarian revolution among the Manobo PAGE 9

NPA seizes 20 firearms PAGE 13

with the present and former regimes, big foreign and comprador corporations who own mines, commercial logging interests, cemented fishponds, factories, subdivisions and other gigantic establishments that block the flow of rivers and lakes and dispose of waste in bodies of water have been on a relentless orgy of plunder.

The Philippines is struck every year by an average of 20 typhoons, and by earthquakes and other disasters. But up to P1.1 billion worth of equipment purchased by the government way back in 2001 to predict and control flooding in Metro Manila, Laguna and Rizal has been left to rot without ever being used. Nine major flood control projects worth P82 billion and covering Metro Manila and its environs have not been given priority.

Central and Northern Luzon suffered massive flooding after the San Roque, Pantabangan and other dams released water, swelling rivers and other waterways and smashing dikes and riverbanks. Most of those affected never re-

ceived any flood warnings and did not get any assistance. Instead of releasing water gradually after



days of rain, the dam managers waited until the dam waters reached critical levels before opening the gates. They rued more the loss of the dam water and the profits they could have raked in than the devastation this would

bring to the people's lives and livelihood.

The ruling regime's greed and corruption aggravate its callousness and unpreparedness.

Even before typhoon Ondoy struck, Arroyo and her greedy minions had practically used up the P2 billion calamity fund for this year. Almost half of it was used for Arroyo and her retinue's junkets and parties in the US and other countries, with the rest diverted to various government agencies. It has been admitted by no less than the Department of Budget and Management that only P24 million was left of the fund when the two big storms hit the country. Faced with such widespread devastation, the government could only give a tiny amount to the victims of the back to back typhoons.

No significant assistance was forthcoming from the government for the millions of victims in Metro Manila, Laguna, Rizal and the Central and Northern Luzon provinces who have been relying mainly on aid from the private sector and concerned citizens here and abroad.

The reactionary and puppet government's incompetence has even paved the way for US imperialism to deodorize and strengthen its military presence in the Philippines. The US has been using rescue operations as a cover to bring hundreds of troops into the country, intensify its interventionism and permanent military presence and justify the Visiting Forces Agreement and other unequal military agreements.

The people must hold Arroyo, her imperialist master and local cohorts responsible for the disasters that have wrought widespread devastation and suffering to them. The puppet regime has laid the country wide open to the plunder



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Contents

Editorial

Regime is responsible for devastation	1
Progressive groups provide aid to victims	4
Calamities worsen economic bankruptcy	5
Bicolanos oppose dam project	6
Struggle against San Roque Dam	7
Agrarian revolution among the Manobo	9

Fascist state on a rampage

AFP uses civilians as human shields	10
Military atrocities in Samar	10
Justice for Fr. Lucero	11
Regime condones RPA brutalities	12

Victorious tactical offensives

NPA in Samar seizes 15 firearms	13
Bukidnon NPA hauls in 5 firearms	13

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of big imperialist and comprador mines, commercial loggers and huge establishments that have siphoned off the country's wealth, destroyed the environment and impoverished the people. These plunderers have enriched the avaricious Arroyo clique and have never given a damn about the people's welfare and the devastation wrought by their plunder of the nation's patrimony.

The US-Arroyo regime, the imperialists and their local cohorts must pay for their culpability in the widespread destruction and bigger sufferings now being borne by the people.

The large-scale destruction of farmlands, fishing grounds, poultry farms, piggeries and other sources of livelihood are a big blow to the peasant masses. The suffering caused by the floods and landslides have worsened the lot of poor and hungry farmers who have long been at the mercy of imperialist, feudal, semifeudal and bureaucratic exploitation and oppression. It is thus of the utmost urgency for the people to intensify their national-democratic revolutionary struggle. Under the pres-

ent exploitative and oppressive system, the people will always be vulnerable to disasters.

The current situation underscores the need to thoroughly advance agrarian revolution. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the revolutionary forces under its leadership will help in every way possible to organize the peasant masses and agricultural workers in their struggle for a bigger share of the harvest, for more just wages, for the eradication of usury and for better farmgate prices.

The CPP and the revolutionary forces will also arouse and mobilize the proletarian and semiproletarian masses and the middle classes in Metro Manila and the regions affected by the disasters as well as other areas to struggle for jobs, a living wage, humane working conditions, decent housing, lower prices for basic commodities and adequate social services.

The recent calamities and the inutility of the reactionary regime have strengthened calls to exert greater efforts to avoid and overcome the widespread devastation

caused by calamities and for better disaster preparedness. There are growing demands to reduce gargantuan military expenditures, to put a stop to the pork barrel and other means of raiding the nation's coffers, and to bring to a halt the allocation of up to 50% of the national budget to debt service. As an immediate measure, more funds should be allotted to disaster victims and the repair of damaged school buildings, hospitals and other public facilities. In the long term, more assistance must be provided to the people to enable them to get back on their feet and recover their lost livelihoods.

There is a growing clamor for the abrogation of the Mining Act and for an end to the plunder of the country's forests, mountains, waters and other natural resources. On the part of the CPP and NPA, they will continue to strictly enforce the ban on bigtime commercial mining, logging and other activities of foreign companies and their local comprador allies that are destructive to the environment and the people's livelihood.

With Red fighters in the thick of providing assistance to calamity victims, tactical offensives of the NPA are temporarily suspended in the affected areas. But once the people have recovered, there is urgent need for the revolutionary forces and the people to intensify their revolutionary struggles. They are now preparing to launch bigger political and military offensives to hold the US-Arroyo regime accountable for its corruption and other criminal acts and for the calamities these have wrought and to bring to a higher level the struggle to put an end to the sufferings that the ruling semifeudal and semicolonial system has caused the Filipino people. **AB**

Progressive groups continue to aid typhoon victims

Progressive organizations and parties continue to provide assistance to the victims of typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng. Thousands of people in Metro Manila and other provinces are being helped and provided services. Their efforts are being undertaken in coordination with those of various private organizations from the church, media and other sectors in the face of the government's grossly incompetent relief efforts.

Bayan Muna launched relief operations in Marikina; Pasig; Montalban, Rizal; and Quezon City on October 6 and in Guimba, Nueva Ecija on October 13. In Congress, Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo pushed for the immediate approval of the Disaster Management Bill to improve the government's disaster management program. Ocampo said the resolution calls for an efficient, effective and comprehensive disaster management plan and response. He said the government failed to address the needs of the victims of disaster.

Rep. Teodoro Casiño questioned the additional ₱10 billion for the rehabilitation of victims of typhoon Ondoy, saying that the disposition of last year's ₱2 billion calamity fund was already suspect. Casiño proposed that additional funds be taken from the Road User's Tax, Special Fund or other government funds instead of slapping an additional tax on the people to raise resources for the victims. He also demanded the suspension of debt service. The government has set aside up to ₱340.12 billion this year to service the interest due on the country's external debt.

The Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) also continues to launch the Bayanihan ng Masa in various areas. Its members launched cleanup operations in the flooded areas of Quezon City, Marikina, Bulacan and Pasig and also distributed relief goods. The GWP's relief operations have been lauded as the most organized and efficient, especially compared to the chaotic operations of the government and military.

GWP Rep. Liza Maza also challenged Gloria Arroyo to immediately release the stalled Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) so it can be used to assist and rehabilitate calamity victims. She said the ₱20,000 given by each congressperson was meager compared to their annual pork barrel allotments. She also challenged them to give away their pork barrel to the victims

and not just put on a show.

The Kabataan Party implemented a Back-to-School Program to solicit school supplies, uniforms, bags and other items for young victims of the typhoon. Their Serve the People Brigade in Southern Tagalog has also distributed relief goods near Laguna de Bay. Their relief operations are ongoing. Among the areas they have visited are Pangasinan and Tarlac.

Migrante also launched Operasyong Sagip. By collecting donations from Filipino workers and other citizens from various countries, its chapters were able to distribute relief goods in various parts of the country. Their first stops were Quezon City, Marikina and Rizal. The All-UP Workers Union also provided assistance in Quezon City and Calamba, Laguna. The Salinlahi-Alliance for Children's Response likewise distributed relief goods on October 16.

Anakpawis and the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) went to the town of Pateros and launched a medical mission in San Mateo, Rizal.

Anakpawis and KMU questioned the Social Security System (SSS) for claiming to have provided ₱100 million in funds to workers and employees when the money actually ends up lining the pockets of Malacañang's occu-



pants. Anakpawis Rep. Joel Maglunsod said that the multi-million fund should be given directly to SSS members and should not pass through other government offices. He moreover said that SSS Sec. Romulo Neri's allocation of P30 million from the System's fund to the Office of the President and another P5 million to so-called labor groups is suspect. In truth, the workers and employees are not receiving any help whatsoever from the SSS.

Meanwhile, the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY) conducted a medical mission on October 12 in Montalban, Rizal. The Samahang Operasyon Sagip (SOS) which is comprised of doctors and nurses and the Montalban Relocates Alliance (MRA-Kadamay) also provided relief goods in the area. They criticized the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council's (HUDCC) planned relocation of typhoon victims, saying this will merely be an added source of problems to the urban poor. Kadamay said that the proposed relocation sites are so remote and there were no guarantees that the people would be provided services and employment. The planned relocation sites, they said, are no different from those in Bulacan and Montalban where the government's failure to address the needs of relocatees have caused them much hardship.

Meanwhile, the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) called for assistance to victims in the Cordillera region. The Serve the People Brigade-Cordillera Disaster Response Center was the first to distribute relief goods to residents of Pinsao and Fairview in Baguio City. They also helped clean up the debris from houses destroyed by landslides in La Trinidad and Irisan in Benguet. **AB**

Bankrupt economy worsened by calamity

The floodwaters have hardly receded and many of those buried by the landslides have yet to be recovered. But the estimated damage wrought by the typhoons and the loss of life and livelihood incurred by the Filipino people are already staggering.

Independent estimates put the damage to livelihoods and property at a minimum of P23 billion—more than double what the government admits—due to typhoon Ondoy alone. There are still no independent estimates regarding the devastation caused by the floods and landslides at the height of typhoon Pepeng.

Flood-damaged private homes and buildings have yet to be counted. Also not included in the estimate is the income lost due to the delayed departure of ships, planes and trucks and the cost of agricultural products that rotted at terminals or en route to their destinations. Many other problems have come in the wake of the destruction of important in-

frastructure and services like transportation, power and water supply.

Also still to be accounted are the cost of lost or damaged personal property such as home appliances and vehicles as well as stores and other businesses; the extent of damage to the environment; the cost of hospitalizing and treating the injured or those taken ill; and expenses incurred in burying the dead.

Effect on food supply and the entire economy. More than 56% of rice crops in areas ravaged by the typhoon were submerged in flood water. An estimated 35,000 hectares of rice fields have been ruined.

Worse, the harvest season had just begun and the majority have not been able to harvest their crops. According to initial estimates by the Department of Agriculture (DA), up to 650,000 metric tons of unharvested rice were ravaged by the typhoon. Based on the DA's conservative estimates as of October 13, up to P6.77 billion worth of crops were destroyed by typhoon Ondoy and another P6.53 billion by typhoon Pepeng. The country will once again be compelled to increase its rice imports, if not immediately then for the next two quarters.

Government officials insist that overall economic



growth will not be affected by the extensive damage to agriculture caused by the recent typhoons because agriculture accounts for only 10-14% of the entire economy. They obscure the fact that the vast majority of the people are in the countryside and rely on agriculture for a living. Most of them are in the "informal economy" and are not covered by government surveys and statistics. Even though the agricultural sector represents a small part of the gross national product, in reality, the national economy largely depends on it.

Rain or shine. Meanwhile, other aspects of the economy continue to plunge due to the ever worsening economic crises in the country and worldwide.

The country's gross exports plunged by 30.33% (from \$34.5 billion to \$24.0 billion) from January to August. Since 2008, the country's exports have been steadily dropping as a result of overproduction, the worsening recession of the international capitalist system and the shrinking international market for semi-manufactures and agricultural products which comprise the Philippines' main exports. Exports from the country's main industry—assembling imported electronic spare parts for reexport to advanced industrialized countries—has continuously been experiencing the biggest downtrend for more than two years now. Economists expect the country's gross exports to suffer an even steeper decline this year.

The government also insists that unemployment in the country (which stood at 2.9 million or 7.6% of the labor force in July) remains small and has stabilized. It even claims that jobless rates have eased up a bit since January (7.7%) and though this has in-

creased somewhat since July last year (7.4%), only 173,000 were allegedly added to the ranks of the unemployed. Furthermore, government statistics indicate that the number of underemployed has not veered from the four million figure. These statistics, however, could not be farther from the truth.

The Ibon Foundation assailed the senselessness of the government's statistics, which gloss over the huge number of the unemployed and those who have stopped looking for work because there were no jobs to be found. In January, there were already 6.2 million unemployed and more than four million more were underemployed, according to Ibon Foundation's estimates. These figures are

not far from the Social Weather Stations' (SWS) data which state that since 2005, the unemployment rate in the country has rarely fallen below 20%. The SWS's latest survey in June in fact showed that this has gone up to 25.9% (or 10 million unemployed).

Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng which devastated the majority of the rice and vegetable fields in Central and Northern Luzon had not yet even ravaged the country in August when the inflation rate soared due to higher food prices.

With the devastation wrought by these two major disasters, the economic problems of the people, especially the majority poor will worsen even more. **AB**

Bicolanos oppose dam project

Residents of Lupi, Camarines Sur are opposed to the construction of the Libmanan-Cabusao Dam (LCD) in Barangay Malaguico, Sipocot. The P700 million project is a "gift" from Gloria Arroyo to her son Dato, congressman of the province's first district. Should it push through, the LCD will be the largest dam in the region.

Vic Nierva, one of the leaders of the groups opposed to the project said that a large part of Lupi will be submerged if the construction of the dam continues. He said that the public was not consulted before the project was issued an environmental clearance certificate (ECC). The people in the area are now crying out in opposition because there might not be another opportunity to air their sentiments, said Nierva.

Nierva also said that proponents of the dam concealed the contents of the ECC from the people of Lupi. "The dam will erase the history of this town which was established in 1726 as well as the identity and livelihood of the many people who will be affected," he said. He added that vast tracts of agricultural land will be submerged in water which will deny the people of their principal means of living.

On October 8, Tomasito Monzon, Regional Presidential Assistant for Bicol and director of the entire project confirmed that 300 families living along the banks of the Sipocot River will lose their homes when the dam is built. The villages to be affected are Malaguico and Manangle in Sipocot and Lupi Nuevo, Lupi Viejo, San Pedro, San Isidro and Barera in Lupi. **AB**

The people's long history of struggle

The San Roque Multi-Purpose Dam (SRMPD), which was built along the tri-boundary of the towns of San Miguel in Pangasinan and Itogon and Tuba in Benguet is the third largest dam in Asia. It is the third dam built on the Agno River. Upstream can be found the Ambuklao and Binga dams. The SRMPD receives all the water that runs through the Agno River, including the water released by the Ambuklao and Binga dams.

Spurred on by large capitalist interests in the US and Japan, the Marcos regime already had plans to build the dam since the mid-1980s, along with the Chico Dam. But because of the Cordillera people's fierce opposition marked by the historic struggle of the Kalinaga and Bontoc tribes against the Chico Dam, the fascist regime was prevented from continuing with its plans.

The Ramos regime revived the SRMPD project and began its construction in 1997. But the dam project made no headway under the Estrada regime because of the strong opposition of the people in the Cordillera and Pangasinan.

Due to the intense opposition to the dam, the Itogon town council officially withdrew its initial endorsement of the SRMPD in September 2000. But in May 2001, just months after Arroyo took power, the building and operation of the dam pushed through. It began operating in 2003.

Ongoing opposition to the dam. Faced with ceaseless and staunch resistance to the dam, the reactionary puppet state used various means to suppress the opposition. The state relentlessly harassed mass organizations and their leaders who were opposed to the construction of the dam. BAYAN-Central Luzon vice chair Mariano Sepnio was killed on

March 9, 2006. Jose "Apo" Doton, chair of TIMMAWA (Tignay dagiti Mannalon a Mangwayawaya iti Agno), an organization composed of residents of towns along the Agno River that will be affected by the dam was also killed on May 16, 2006.

Foremost among those oppressed by the construction of the dam are the Ibaloi national minorities in Itogon and Tuba, Benguet and residents of San Nicolas and San Manuel, Pangasinan. Their lives and livelihoods depended on the 39,500 hectares grabbed and submerged with the dam's construction. More than 2,000 families comprised of

61,700 people were displaced when the dam was built. The displaced Ibaloi asserting their ancestral ownership of the land on which the dam was constructed are ironically relatives and fellow tribespeople of the other Ibaloi who were displaced from their ancestral lands when the Ambuklao and Binga Dams were constructed. Overall, there are 150,000 people in the area and its environs who lost their livelihoods because of the dams.

Forests and natural resources were also destroyed not only where the dam was built but along most of the Agno River. Residents of these areas lost most of the sources of their livelihood as well as the protection against flooding provided by the Agno River watershed, much of which was also sub-



merged with the construction of the dam.

Huge interests behind the dam. Those opposed to the dam lambasted the big foreign compradors and bureaucrat interests behind the project. Chief among these is the San Roque Power Corp. (SRPC) which owns and controls the dam facilities, equipment and system for power generation and distribution (the dam's physical infrastructure and water level control system are managed by Napocor). The SRPC is a giant merger company established by big capitalists in the US (Sithe Engineers) and Japan (Marubeni Corp. and Kansai Electric Power Corp.).

The dam primarily makes its money from power generation. The SRPC earns a minimum of \$10 million per month on this, whether or not it delivers the electricity it produces, and it earns even bigger profits when electrical consumption rises. Aside from the \$400 million the SRPC made for supervising the dam's construction, the US-based Raytheon Engineers and Contractors which clinched the contract to build the dam also made a hefty sum.

The SRMPD's main beneficiaries are the big foreign and comprador mining companies located alongside the dam and upstream. Three mining companies are operating in the Agno River watershed area itself—the Philex Mining Corp.-owned Sto. Tomas II, the Benguet Mining Corp. and the Itogon-Suyoc Mines. They are also the main consumers of the electricity generated by the SRPC.

To save on the huge costs of cleaning up mine tailings, they use the dam outlets as their dumping ground. This has severely polluted the Agno River and the other rivers and creeks down-

stream. The mine tailings impede the flow of water, cause heavy siltation along the Agno, Ambuklao and Binga rivers and directly contribute to the rapid overflow of water in the series of dams built on these rivers.

Big government bureaucrats also make a lot of money from the kickbacks from the various foreign and comprador interests behind the dam's construction and operation.

Other dangers of the dam. Those opposed to the construction of the dam also warn of the weak foundation it is built on. The dam is situated above the San Manuel fault line that is in great danger of shifting and causing a massive landslide during an earthquake. If the dam breaks, the homes and farms of 1.5 million people living in the plains will be flooded. This comprises almost 60% of the entire population of Pangasinan.

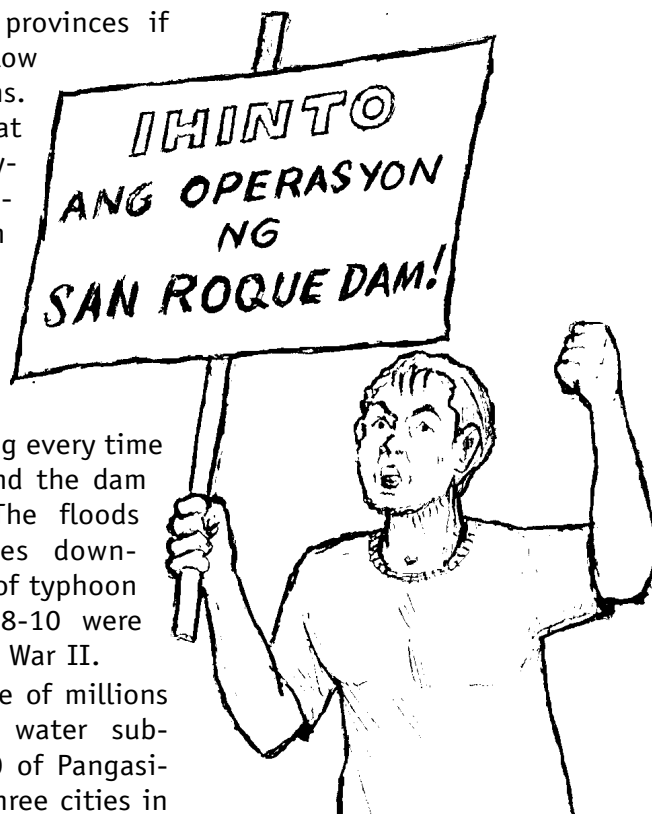
The dam's opponents have also long warned of the danger of flooding in the vast plains of Pangasinan and nearby provinces if the dam waters overflow because of typhoons. This is precisely what happened during typhoon Pepeng's repeated onslaughts in Northern Luzon. Since the SRMPD was built, various communities in Pangasinan have been suffering massive flooding every time there is a typhoon and the dam gates are opened. The floods that hit communities downstream at the height of typhoon Pepeng on October 8-10 were the worst since World War II.

The sudden release of millions of cubic meters of water submerged more than 30 of Pangasinan's 48 towns and three cities in

flood waters that were three to six feet deep. The flood waters even spilled over into parts of Nueva Ecija and Tarlac. More than 600,000 people in 627 villages were affected. More than 60,000 people were living in 119 evacuation centers. Based on initial reports from the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, the province has sustained damage worth P181.25 million in infrastructure, P1.4 billion in rice fields, P1.4 billion in corn fields, P160 million in vegetable fields, P96.4 million in fisheries and P1.13 million in livestock. At least 57 people were killed.

The deluge that struck Pangasinan angered various sectors especially those devastated by the flood and revived criticism and protests against the SRMPD which for three decades had been raging throughout the Cordillera and Pangasinan. Various people's groups launched protest actions and filed cases in court against Napocor and the SRPC.

AB



Gains of agrarian revolution among the Manobo

The seeds of agrarian revolution planted by the revolutionary movement and the Manobo people's militant struggle to defend them have spilled over to many other areas of Mindanao. Following are the bountiful fruits of the efforts that first began in a single guerrilla front in the island.

Employment grew in the farms and parts of logging areas. Wages of agricultural workers were raised from P30 to P40 per day in the 1980s, to P150 in 2007, P200 in 2008 and P250 this year. It was the local chapters of the mass organizations no less that spearheaded the drive to attain these wage hikes. There was not even any need to launch campaigns for this purpose. The wages now received by farm workers are a far cry from the daily wage of P190 received by construction workers. Other regions have since followed suit, so much so that today, up to 11,000 agricultural workers enjoy

the fruits of this victory.

The farmers are also now in a position to control the price of rattan and falcatta every year. They were able to raise the price of abaca twofold as a result of a meeting in 2006 where abaca producers organized to achieve a unified stand on abaca prices. More than 11,000 individuals have benefited from this gain. Meanwhile, rentals for abaca stripping machines have been reduced from 20-25% to only 15% of the total cost of abaca.

Despite the difficulties encountered at the beginning, cooperative stores were successfully es-

tablished and continue to thrive. They have even grown in number since the latter part of 1990. The masses can now buy basic consumer products and other needs at the store for very affordable prices. The cooperative stores only add a P0.50 to P1 markup for every item even though the nearest town center where these products can be bought is almost 30 kilometers away.

The stores do not sell liquor as a matter of policy, except during town fiestas. Neither do they sell junk food, in compliance with the comrades' health campaign. Volunteers man the stores and receive a 10% share of the gross sales in lieu of a regular salary.

The farmers can borrow money from the cooperatives without interest. Those who are extremely hard up and in need of bigger amounts are given loans on condition that they temporarily allow the cooperative to manage their land. This is done to ensure that the needy farmer will be able to gradually pay off his debt and still have enough resources for his family's consumption. The farmer still gets to work on his farm and harvest his crops. Once the debt is paid, the cooperative turns over the land to the farmer. This is a mechanism that ensures that farmers in dire straits have a choice other than to deal with usurers who will eventually take ownership of their land once they fail to pay their debts. This also prevents the reconcentration of land in the hands of a few.

The cooperatives' existence has led to the eradication of usury in the area and the prevention of land foreclosures.

The Red fighters also distribute seeds to the farmers and later get paid back, also with seeds.

The revolutionary movement also encourages the use of organic fertilizer. There are demonstration farms that use natural fertilizer made from ginger, onions and muscovado, or chicken manure.

Meanwhile, there are continued efforts to form more agrarian revolution committees, which organize and provide training on scientific farming. The committees are composed of Party members and mass activists. **AB**





Military uses civilians as human shields

The sitio (sub-village) of Makopa in Barangay Mahan-ub in Baganga, Davao Oriental has become a virtual garrison since reactionary government forces implemented the Barangay Defense System (BDS) where civilians are forcibly mobilized to fight the New People's Army (NPA). The BDS was first put into operation in the Luzon areas where Gen. Jovito Palparan was notorious for sowing terror among the people. Since June, elements of the 67th and 72nd IB elements have been enforcing the BDS in the various sub-villages of Baganga.

Under the BDS, all residents are forced to guard military detachments once a week.

The military exempts no one from guard duty—woman or man, young or old. Even pregnant women are required to report to the detachment. In the AFP's point of view, having civilians as look-outs is a definite guarantee against an NPA attack.

Anyone who wants to be excused from guard duty is obliged to give rice, coffee or sugar to the detachment as forced contribution. This alone is a big loss to poor Mandaya farmers in Sitio Mahan-ub who live a hand-to-mouth existence.

The fascist military has also been forcing the residents to report on the NPA's movements and whereabouts. It has been threatening civilians that should the soldiers lose in battles with the NPA, the AFP will retaliate against them.

In a move to purportedly deprive the NPA of mass support, the AFP has been limiting the volume of food the villagers can buy. It only allows a maximum of 15 kilos of rice per family for ten days, regardless of the number of family members. Anything in excess will have to be deposited at the military detachment and can be claimed only after ten days. The

abusive military elements control even the purchase of sugar, cooking oil, salt, kerosene and cigarettes.

The military elements have also been controlling and closely monitoring the movements of the villagers. The soldiers would regularly conduct a census in the communities, where the fascist soldiers ask parents where their children are.

The residents are also reluctant to tend to their farms, afraid that



soldiers will use them as guides during military operations.

The AFP's practice of using civilians as human shields is a gross violation of the rules of war and international human rights protocols. AB

Military atrocities in Samar

Human rights worker Ruth Gecaro of Catubig, Northern Samar was abducted on October 5 and has not been seen since. She was seized by suspected elements of the 63rd IB while she was on her way to accompany members of the National Fact Finding Mission on the Killing of Fr. Cecilio Lucero. Gecaro was to gather the witnesses and victims when the suspects dragged her into a vehicle.

On August 27, a unit of the 63rd IB abducted and mercilessly shot to death Jojo Basiloy and Jerwyn Marino, both peasants, while they were farming abaca in Sitio Gepili, Barangay Sumuroy, Lope de Vega, Northern Samar. The victims were both village councilors. Their other companion Elinor Morillo managed to escape from the shooting.

The military elements also continue to harass student leaders of the University of Eastern Philippines in Barangay Cawayan, Catarman, Northern Samar. One of those threatened by the military is the former chairperson of the University Student Council and the child of Prof. Jose Ma. Cui. Cui, who was then COURAGE chairperson in the province, was killed by the military in January 2007. AB

Justice for Fr. Cecilio Lucero

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the revolutionary forces under its leadership joined the family and friends of slain human rights advocate Fr. Cecilio Lucero in the commemorating the 40th day of his death last October 15.

Fr. Lucero chaired the Human Rights Desk of the Social Action Center of the Diocese of Catarman and the Task Force on Peace and Order of the Northern Samar Peace and Development Forum. He was brutally assassinated by the fascist military for his bravery and courage in openly condemning human rights abuses. There had been instances when he helped or he himself filed charges against the military. Before he was shot to death, he had long been under the close watch of military operatives and intelligence assets of the fascist state.

Under orders from those whose antipeople interests he often lashed out against, Fr. Lucero was ambushed by heavily armed assailants wearing ski masks and military uniforms at around 8:30 a.m. on September 6 in San Jose, Northern Samar. His murder was carefully planned and carried out as a big military operation. No less than 30 military operatives were involved in the entire operation in order to ensure his death. Five operatives waiting in ambush while coordinating with others trailing the van, fired their Armalite rifles while Fr. Lucero was driving his van through Sitio Fuente, Barangay Layuhan, San Jose, Northern Samar. Fr. Lucero died on the spot. His two companions in the van were wounded, as was a passenger in a nearby jeepney who was hit by a stray bullet.

No less than Gloria Arroyo herself is personally responsible for

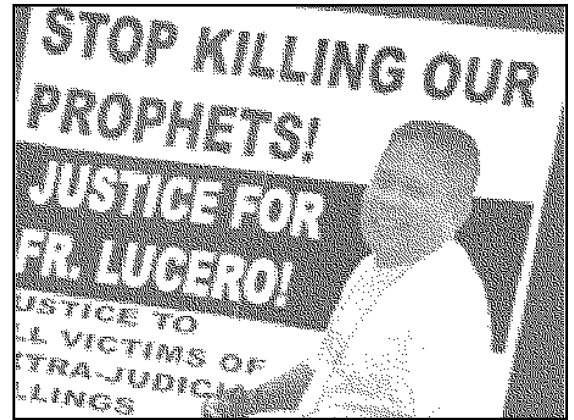
the killing of Fr. Lucero.

When she inaugurated the Las Navas bridge in Northern Samar last June 16, she publicly denounced Fr. Lucero as "that communist priest" in front of Maj. Gen. Arthur Tabaquero and other high-ranking military and civilian officials in the province. In doing so, she virtually signed Fr. Lucero's death warrant and gave the go-signal for a military offensive against the priest.

The priest's brutal murder underscores the Arroyo regime's continuing campaign of repression and extrajudicial killings. From 2001 to the first half of 2009, almost 1,110 farmers, workers, human rights defenders, students, church people, journalists and other critics of the Arroyo regime have been murdered by armed elements of the AFP.

Most of the victims were members of patriotic, democratic and progressive mass organizations who were branded as "enemies of the state" by the AFP's official dogmatists. These organizations have actively opposed the puppetry and fascist violence of the Arroyo regime. Inside parliament and in the streets, they have effectively exposed the rottenness and cruelty of the ruling regime and continue to organize and mobilize the people in protest movements and mass struggles.

This year alone, more than 60 people have been gunned down by Arroyo's fascist agents. Arroyo and



her cabal of fascist officials have contemptuously dismissed calls and recommendations made by the United Nations and other international as well as national organizations to put a stop to extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the state's military and security forces. These forces have long been showing complete disregard for universally accepted human rights, make no difference between armed resistance and unarmed opposition and have been including in their order of battle an increasing number of unarmed critics and even plain civilians.

The number of extrajudicial killings is bound to increase further as the AFP's "counter-insurgency" Oplan Bantay Laya 2 nears its end and the military grows ever more desperate to mask its failure. Arroyo and her military and security minions are resorting to violent suppression as she schemes to perpetuate herself in power.

As the economic and political crisis of the ruling system continues to worsen, the reactionary ruling state is resorting to more vicious means of suppressing the people's resistance and struggles to advance their national and democratic interests. **AB**



Regime condones RPA's brutality

There is an obvious pattern of repression and utter inaction by the Arroyo government on the brutalities committed by the Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) bandit group in Negros, said National Federation of Sugarcane Workers (NFSW) chairperson Isidro Castillo. The NFSW, along with other democratic and progressive organizations in Negros Occidental condemned the continuing terror sowed by the RPA in the province.

Since May, five farmers have been killed and two others abducted by this paramilitary group. The RPA has also been wreaking havoc on the people's livelihood, as seen in the indiscriminate shooting in May of seven carabaos owned by the farmers in Sitio Manayahan, Barangay Minautok, Calatrava.

The RPA's latest victim was Reynaldo Bucaling, 41, chairperson of Pakigdaet sa Kalambuan sa Kambayugo (PSK), an NFSW affiliate organization. He was shot to death in his house in Purok Dalia, Baran-

gay Bug-ang, Toboso town in the morning of October 5. His wife Nida, 38, recounted that at around 8 p.m. of October 4, RPA members went to their house looking for her husband Reynaldo. The armed men left when the peasant leader did not show up. At around 6 a.m. the following morning, an RPA element suddenly appeared and shot the victim to death as he was boiling water in his kitchen. Reynaldo sustained six gunshot wounds all over his body.

After the murder, elements of the 62nd IB quickly arrived at the crime scene and then later gave the empty

shells of M16 bullets they gathered to the Toboso PNP. It was only at noon that the police arrived in Purok Dalia. The chronology of events has led Karapatan-Negros to strongly suspect

that the 62nd IB is also involved in Bucaling's murder.

Even before his assassination, democratic and progressive organ-

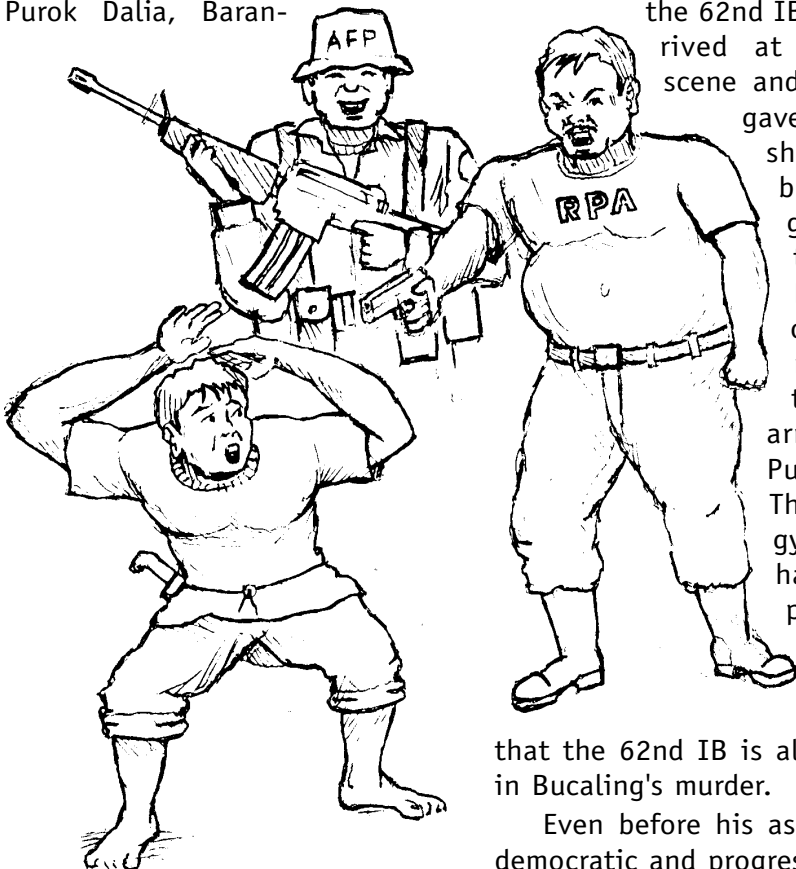
izations had already expressed concern about the series of violent incidents involving the RPA. On September 11, progressive organizations such as Karapatan-Negros, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, the NFSW and the Negros Press Club as well as a number of personalities strongly denounced in a press conference the utter inaction of the Arroyo government and the police on the abuses against farmers perpetrated by RPA elements.

The RPA victims, who were all NFSW members and residents of Victorias City were identified as Carlito Dacudao (August 21); Edwin Oyeman (August 10); Anecito Blanco (August 5); and Roger Tumacas (July 10). They were all shot to death.

On May 26, the RPA abducted 18-year old Razel Pelayo while he was working in a nipa plantation in Hacienda Estrella, Barangay Sibaca, Cadiz City. Also abducted was 20-year old Jason Pelayo, Razel's first cousin. Of the ten RPA members who abducted Razel, at least four were recognized by his father Rene. They were Ronald Dequita, Bebing Dequita, Cita Berja and Kawel Braba. The elder Pelayo saw the RPA elements dragging his son and Jason towards Sitio Bisang, Barangay Luna, Cadiz City.

In the same press conference, the participants also strongly denounced Chief Insp. Noel Manaay, Cadiz City-PNP chief for his inaction over these cases. He would always say that the two victims are in good condition but could not give any information on their whereabouts.

AB





NPA in Samar seizes 15 firearms

The New People's Army (NPA) confiscated 15 firearms in four victorious tactical offensives launched in Samar island in the first half of October. Two government soldiers were killed and nine others were wounded in these clashes.

Initial reports from the Arnulfo Ortiz Command said that Red fighters seized seven firearms from military elements in Pagsanjan town in Samar on October 2.

On October 1, Red fighters of the Serafin Pacimos Command ambushed 23 abusive troops of the 63rd IB in Barangay Ligaya, Matuguinao, Samar at around 10 a.m. The Red guerrillas were able to seize an M16 armalite rifle after a ten-minute firefight. The AFP suffered two killed and one wounded, while there were no casualties on the NPA side.

The demoralized military troops continued firing even after the Red fighters had safely withdrawn from the clash scene. The village militia joined the NPA in this victorious tactical offensive.

That same day, Red fighters disarmed security guards of a fishpond in Barangay Inoragyaw, Sta. Margarita, Samar without firing a single shot. The fishpond is owned by a despotic landlord. The NPA confiscated four shotguns, a carbine, a .45 caliber pistol, a .38 revolver and two pump boat motors. The raid served as a punitive action for the owner's land grabbing activities and for paying his workers low wages, depriving them of job security and destroying the livelihood of fisherfolk living around the area.

Meanwhile, eight soldiers of the 63rd IB were wounded in an ambush by NPA Red fighters of the Rogelio Bantilo Command on October 11 in Barangay Hibonawan,

Silvino Lobos, Northern Samar. Among those wounded was Lt. Joash Pramis, commander of the operating unit.

Contrary to claims made by Lt. Col. Armando Rico, 8th ID spokesperson, there were no casualties on the side of the NPA.

Fr. Santiago Salas, National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas spokesperson, meanwhile, commended the valiant Red fighters of the RBC for meting punishment on fascist military units such as the 63rd IB. This particular military unit is involved in numerous cases of human rights violations, including the murder of Fr. Cecilio Lucero.^{AB}



NPA seizes 5 firearms in Bukidnon

Red fighters of the New People's Army Julito Tiro Command (JTC-NPA) confiscated five firearms in an ambush staged against soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the morning of October 9 in Upper Kalampigan, Barangay Guilang-guilang, Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon. Three soldiers were killed on the spot and another was wounded while the NPA sustained no casualties.

The JTC is under the North Central Mindanao Regional Operations Command.

The NPA guerrillas seized an M203 grenade launcher, two M16 armalite rifles, an M14 and a .380 pistol from the soldiers who also serve as company guards of a copper mining firm in Upper Kalampigan, said Ed Laguerra, JTC media officer.

Laguerra added that the tactical offensive is a punitive action against the mining company that has for several decades been responsible for the destruction of the people's livelihood in Bukidnon, especially the Lumad. Worse, the mining company is involved in numerous abuses against the people and in the plunder of the area's natural resources. This has aggravated the already miserable economic and cultural conditions of the Lumad.

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